

Alexa Wutt: This is Alexa Wutt from Michigan Sea Grant at the National Working Waterfront Symposium in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Today is May 16th, 2018. So, I will ask, if you can please state and spell your name, share your occupation and town and today's date.

Joseph Lane: My name is Joseph Lane, J-O-S-E-P-H, L-A-N-E. My occupation, I am an academic instructor. I am a part-time instructor at Western Michigan University Aquinas College, Kellogg Community College, and Kalamazoo Valley Community College. I teach a wide range of physical geography to human geography. What was the other?

AW: Your town. I guess, that sounds like a long...

JL: Currently, I live in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

AW: And then today's date.

JL: Today is May 16th, 2018.

AW: Awesome. So, we will start out with a broad question. What is your working waterfront story?

JL: So, I have had a real big interest in guided educational tourism, specifically on working waterfronts on and in the Great Lakes region, for my entire life. I spent my college summers working for Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry, and I really got a good feel of how working waterfronts, especially in Northern Michigan, work. I have spent the last season, last summer season a year ago as the primary tour guide for the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association. It's based outside Mackinac City. We essentially did three-to-five-hour boat tours showing people offshore lighthouses throughout the Great Lakes. I spent 10 days as a doctoral student researcher on St. Helena Island, which has a fully restored lighthouse. It is owned by the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association, and the rest of the island is owned by the Little Traverse Nature Conservancy. Mainly, my interests are just like that. In guided educational tourism on the Great Lakes, my overall goal is to bring students to the Straits of Mackinac, potentially to St. Helena Island. I'd like to have them maybe spend four or five days on the island, learning about the heritage tourism of the island itself, and essentially getting in as many lighthouses as possible throughout the states. Michigan has 129 lighthouses, more than any other state. My primary interests, originally, were more in the maritime history, more in the actual waterfronts themselves. Just based upon my position last year, I was able to really become interested in lighthouses and using them as a backdrop for science education, for historical tourism, for heritage tourism. That is really what my story is based on, is getting more people up to see these really now obsolete pieces of technology. But these obsolete pieces of technology brought us to things like cellphones and smartphones. Essentially, these lighthouses were there to guide mariners in order to haul goods, in order to haul people. It is what the highway was back in the eighteen -- nineteen -- early 1900s. It has a tremendous history in terms of really any type of tourism you want to look at, whether it be heritage, industrial, archaeology, simply maritime, or you just want to come out and see what the Great Lakes look like. In my mind, the working waterfronts can add to the tremendous amount of tourism that is already in the area. Mackinac Island, obviously one of the state's largest draws for out-of-state tourism. This is something that

can just be added to that. So, Mackinac Island in itself, and Mackinac City, they have remained the same for a long time. Adding some guided educational tourism to this really big tourist area can only benefit it. That's my interest.

AW: What do you think is the benefit of connecting communities to these lighthouses?

JL: So, you look at Northern Michigan, and really through all the presentations I have been in, in Northern Michigan, their major industry is currently tourism, or it is becoming tourism. I just went to a presentation on islands throughout the nation, and specifically the Great Lakes. One presentation was on Beaver Island. Currently, there are two lighthouses that have been restored to some level on Beaver Island. The interior of the lighthouses is not yet restored. Getting people connected with them, getting people to realize that "Hey, I'm going to Beaver Island. I'm there to camp. I'm there to fish. I'm there to hunt. But in addition, maybe I can learn something about the heritage. Maybe I can learn something about the actual reason this island first became populated." That is all related to connecting the communities to this extra – additional part of educational tourism.

AW: What do you find are some of the challenges right now associated with lighthouse restoration or connecting people with the lighthouses?

JL: Money. It's obviously money. The season is pretty short as well. So, first of all, I'd say money. An offshore lighthouse can – beginning restoration processes is just going to be astronomical. You need to have a barge. You need to have an experienced crew. You need to have proper ways to remove the dangerous chemicals that are on that lighthouse, the asbestos, the lead-based paints. Cost is a major issue. The season is also quite short. So, as a lighthouse tour guide, we were essentially four or five trips in June, good season, July and August, and four or five trips in September. That was it. It's very difficult to maintain a full-time tour guide when they were only going to be working for a couple of months out of the year. So, mainly what this organization has done in order to promote their tourism aspect, they have a gift shop. They've really focused on using their mainland gift shop in Mackinac City as a place where they can also do educational workshops. So, they're trying to basically use their gift shop in a similar format that they use the island lighthouse. They want to use the gift shop all year round, island lighthouse, about six weeks out of the year.

AW: Are you familiar with any communities that have a very strong relationship with their lighthouse and successfully restored their lighthouse?

JL: Mackinac City is a pretty good example of that because there are two organizations in Mackinac City that restore lighthouses. In addition, the city – I'm sorry, the county of Emmet County, owns and operates McGulpin Point Lighthouse, which is on the mainland. Mackinac City is definitely a place where restoration of lighthouses is important, mainly because they have boats that can leave that harbor and go to these lighthouses. It'd be the very same thing for St. Ignace, again, main reason being because they have the ability to go to those lighthouses. In addition, both St. Ignace and Mackinac City are in the Straits. There are sixteen lighthouses that we would tour on our three-hour tours. So, that's hitting sixteen individual lighthouses. Each of them has their own history, their own unique heritage tourism. So, I'd say those two cities are

very much related. Even if you look at the much smaller places like Detour, Michigan, Charlevoix, Michigan, Leland, Michigan, just being in areas where there's already tourism, and there are methods to get out and see these offshore or island lighthouses where there would be boats. So, Leland having Manitou Islands; Charlevoix, Beaver Island; Mackinac City, St. Ignace, Mackinac Island.

AW: How do you find the lighthouse system interacts with working waterfronts in those areas?

JL: It's getting a lot better. So, generally, the lighthouses were all built by the U.S. Coast Guard before that. I'm sorry, the U.S. Navy actually started building the lighthouses. Over time, they switched to the Coast Guard. Now, if the lighthouses are owned by the Coast Guard, the only part that is owned by them is the light, the foghorn, and the batteries that power, as well as the solar panels. So, all of the other Michigan lighthouses are privately owned or publicly owned. So, can you repeat the question again exactly?

AW: I was just asking – if I can remember what the question was.

JL: I'm sorry.

AW: No, you are good. How the working waterfront community connects with the lighthouses, what that interaction is like.

JL: In Michigan, in the Great Lakes, especially in West Michigan, using in a different area, looking at the West Michigan shoreline from New Buffalo up to Frankfort, the lighthouses are essentially the icon. So, St. Joe Michigan just put in \$2 million to basically restore the pier that the lighthouse sits on. That made really a long-term investment in the city's tourism because they use that lighthouse on absolutely every city image that they have. That's very similar for South Haven, Holland, Grand Haven. The lighthouse is the backdrop for why the town's there. The town's there because the river's there. The river needed to be marked. That was a navigational aid. That was technology. Today, it's tourism. It's heritage tourism, showing us why this place came to be, and why it is now a tourism area.

AW: That makes a lot of sense. Do you have a favorite memory associated with your time as a tour guide where someone was particularly influenced by what you were teaching or something like that?

JL: The coolest, by far, by all means, I worked for Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry for about six summers. I had seen these lighthouses over and over again. I had been a PhD student. I worked with these lighthouse keepers for about five years. Last year was really the pinnacle. I was the head tour guide. I can tell you, taking people out to these lighthouses, that have been to Mackinac Island their entire lives, they've never been 10 miles past it. They've never seen anything past it. Just to go out into these waterways where you go to downtown Mackinac Island, there's 5,000 people. You go out to the Bob-Lo Island Lighthouse, and you are by yourself. Seeing the reactions people get from being in Northern Michigan, being in places that they thought they knew very well, and it turns out there's still new stuff to see. That, to me, is what the rewards were, the tourism reward.

AW: So, how would you say the National Working Waterfront Network can support you and this lighthouse community going forward?

JL: So, two things I'm interested in, the lighthouses and the education. I'm going to be very honest. When I started a lighthouse – my first lighthouse tour about a year ago, I didn't know much about lighthouses. So, I focused on the educational side. My background is in geography. So, I was really able to develop my entire three-hour tour based on teaching people about physical geography. I think National Working Waterfronts can – I think we can have a much better connection in terms of educational tourism. Teaching people why these waterfronts are here, what their original uses were, what their tourism uses will be, what their future will be. Education and working waterfronts could have a closer relationship. We can teach people a lot of things that they are already interested in. So, I think the connection can be done through education, between lighthouses and working waterfronts.

AW: For sure. Associated with that, what are the tools and information that you would need to better address some of these challenges with getting place-based education out there to these people?

JL: So, place-based education is a great word for that. My biggest struggle has been the numerous organizations. Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association that I worked with, they own or we own two lighthouses. That's two out of 129. All of the other ones are either privately owned, or they're owned by some type of public entity. It's very hard to get everybody on the same ballpark. So, fortunately for us, we would tour the outsides of the other fourteen lighthouses in the Straits. Two of them we could go inside. The other fourteen, we could not. Having a much more cohesive relationship between the owners, the managers of these lighthouses, and the people that want to see them would really benefit. So, I got to be honest, the company I worked for, they didn't know anything about this. They would have been a great fit to be down here. I'm not saying, you know, I should have contacted them. I think that one of the tools would be simply better communication, better networking. You're talking about lots of money. You're talking about people that have very specific interests. But if we come together, Straits of Michigan, Straits of Mackinac Lighthouses or Michigan Lighthouses or Lake Michigan Lighthouses, we could really have a lot more cohesiveness.

AW: Agreed. Let us see. I think that was all of my questions. Is there anything else you wanted to add?

JL: Just the fact that I'm really excited about the educational idea. I've told you my story before. I'm interested in finding full-time work. If I was able to, in the end, develop really an educational tour that would be related to Great Lakes Lighthouses and working waterfronts, boy, you could pretty much market that all over the place. That is what my interests really are. So, any type of people you could connect me with in that, I'd be very appreciative. I'm all ready for [inaudible].

AW: Cool, thank you.

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